



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE OUTLOOK FOR ENGLISH

It is but little over a year since the publication of the paper entitled "Regents' English," yet in this brief space of time many important steps have been taken and measures discussed, which it will be profitable to recapitulate.

First came the Binghamton conference, devoted exclusively to a discussion of the English question—see REVIEW for May, 1893. Nearly contemporaneously with this conference, the regents announced their new programme, requiring three years of English instruction in all high schools and academies. Soon after the regents had taken action, the faculty of Cornell voted to adopt the regents' requirements and to discontinue certificates in English from private schools. In July, at the regular regents' conference, English was made a prominent, perhaps, I may say, the most prominent, subject of debate. Among the papers read was one which I had prepared, at the request of the secretary, and in which I indicated what seemed to me the best ways and means of making the new programme effective. In consequence of a printers' strike in the Albany office, the proceedings of the regents have not yet been published. I am unable, therefore, to put before the reader the views advanced by the several speakers who took part in the discussion. Enough in this place to state that every presentation of the claims of sound, practical English, met with the hearty approval of the meeting.

In New England also this question has come to the front. It enjoyed the lion's share of the proceedings of the Conference of College and Preparatory schools, held at Yale in October last, as appears from the report in the REVIEW for December. The paper by Professor Wendell, of Harvard, seems to me to be especially happy in presenting a clear and comprehensive survey of the difficulties inherent in the question. At the Convention of Colleges and Preparatory schools of the Middle states, held at Columbia college during the Thanksgiving holidays, English was the topic during a long morning session and elicited a most spirited debate.

It will be evident from the mere statement of facts, that interest in this vital question is growing rapidly, both in volume and in intensity. The educational world appears to have awakened from

its lethargy, to have discovered suddenly that it has been wandering from the safe path, and to be inquiring anxiously, "What are we to do? Things are in frightful disorder. Where is the remedy?"

The first step in all reform is to acknowledge frankly the evil. That has been done in the present case, and so far at least the reform campaign has been fully opened. *But it has not yet been won*, that is, the enemies, doubt, hesitation, indifference, have not yet been driven from the field.

It is one thing to admit unqualifiedly that the average boy, on leaving school, is unable to write well, if indeed he can be said to write at all. It is quite another thing to put the finger right on the root of the evil and say, *Here* it is and *here* it must be cured. Where, then, is the root of the evil? In Yankee fashion let me answer the question by propounding a series of counter questions. They may be regarded as addressed to every teacher, professor, scholar, or parent, individually. The audience is not a restricted one.

1. Do you not *grudge* the time put upon English writing? Do you not confess to yourself in secret that the time might be pared down occasionally, to accommodate the more urgent demands of Latin, or mathematics?

2. Do you not say in private, perhaps even in public, that there are boys who cannot be taught to spell? That these boys are color-blind, so to speak, and therefore incurable upon the shade of difference between "receive" and "relieve," "too" and "to," "inoculate" and "innocuous."

3. Do you not truly believe that it would be a shame, an injustice, to keep out of college a boy fairly up in foreign languages and mathematics, yet unable to write in his mother tongue a paragraph that the college professor can read without reconstruction?

4. Do you not "pass" as satisfactory papers that bristle with faults of expression? Do you not vote, will you not continue to vote, to graduate from your institution boys or young men whom you know, from your own experience, to be incapable of penning a thesis, a report, even a letter that will not set the reader's teeth on edge?

I might add a few more like questions, but these few should be enough. They indicate the spot upon which *one* reformer at least is ready to place *his* finger. To my way of thinking, the

question is not one of "might" or "ought," but of "must." As I took the liberty of saying at the Middle States convention a fortnight ago: Demand good English, and you will get it. Express merely a wish for it, and you will not get it. Pass a boy up on general average and you will not get it.

Is the demand for good English writing universal and imperative in school and college? I wish with all my heart that it were. But I cannot in sincerity persuade myself that it is. How can I, when a college faculty votes to admit *quand même* a young fellow whose school certificate states on the face of it that the English work was grossly neglected? Or another young fellow who fails twice in the English examination, the second time worse than the first, presumably because the intervening time was passed in acquiring advanced mathematics?

In all matters of reform, the best policy is frankness. In this particular matter we have taken the start; but frankness bids us admit that we have not reached the goal, in fact that we are a good way off. The regents have voted that papers in all subjects be read for expression as well as for subject-matter. Are they ready to punish the school by rejecting outright a badly expressed paper in, let us say, geography or physics? If they are thus ready, they have won the fight for their schools. If the college faculties are ready to do the same by their papers, they have won their fight. Are parents ready to insist that *their* child, for his own sake, *shall* be taught to write well! If so, they have won their fight.

Here are "ifs" not a few. But they are all inevitable. They tempt me to try to reduce them to a general hypothesis. To write well means: to spell correctly, to discriminate in the use of words, to arrange words in proper grammatical relation, to group sentences in a paragraph organized around a central thought or opinion, to co-ordinate half a dozen or more paragraphs so as to indicate, approximately at least, some evolution of the thinking faculty.

If you concede that writing in this sense is the essential, the indispensable ingredient of all scholarly work, from rudimentary geography to the history of philosophy, then you change the hypothesis into an axiom, a basis of further action. Upon this basis we can erect a practical working theory by which to solve all details: quantity, form, method of instruction. Without this basis,

every reform that we may attempt will be desultory, haphazard, and more or less wasteful of time and energy.

Are the schools and colleges of this state, or any state, prepared to maintain the axiom? I do not believe that they are. Therefore I believe, by way of corollary, that we have only begun an onward movement, the end of which will assuredly not be seen in this century.

J. M. Hart

Cornell University

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND PREPARATORY SCHOOLS

The Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland, held its conference this year at Columbia college on the Friday and Saturday following Thanksgiving. This has come to be one of the notable educational gatherings of the year, and the meeting this year was certainly one of great value and interest. The executive committee arranged a most sensible program, focusing the attention of the gathering on a few important questions. The whole of the first day was taken up with the general place of the languages in the curriculum, the forenoon session being devoted to the question, Should the degree of A. B. be given to students who have had neither Greek nor Latin? and the afternoon to the related topic, Can any amount of modern language study be made to take the place of the classics in a liberal curriculum? A number of thoughtful papers were presented, and the discussion was animated. Partisans of the classics did not have it all their way, numerically, but on the merits of the question they certainly won the debate. The only paper presented that took the ground that the degree of A. B. might and should be given without Greek and Latin was that of Melvil Dewey. It is only fair to Mr. Dewey to state that he favored no such change in the meaning of the degree while our educational system remained substantially in its present form. His plan contemplated a far-reaching reorganization of higher education in which the degree could have a different meaning from that now conventionally given it. On Saturday the entire